Claims

1. Communications apparatus comprising a router and at least one
connection controller which router, in use, routing data to and from
terminals on a local area network and the connection controller
controlling connections involving at least one of the terminals to
another network, a network address translation translator for
translating addresses on incoming data to addresses of terminals on
the local area network; a monitor for monitoring the usage of a
network addresses and for sending a message indicative of non-usage
to the connection controller; the connection controller being
responsive to the receipt of the message to determine whether to
release the connection to the another network.

2. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein the network address
translator includes a table of network addresses having associated use
state data.

3. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 or 2 wherein the monitor is an IP
router.

4. Apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 3 wherein the
connection operates in accordance with a point to point
protocol(PPP).

5. Apparatus as claimed in claim 4 wherein the connection operates in
accordance with a point to point protocol(PPP) and at least one
additional protocol.

6. Apparatus as claimed in claim 5 wherein the at least one additional protocol is one of a point to point tunnelling protocol (PPTP) or a point to point protocol over Ethernet (PPPoE).

7. Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the connection controller is an entity on the router.

8. Apparatus as claimed in claim 7 wherein the at least one connection controller is a software object.

9. Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim wherein a plurality of respective connection controllers is provided each controlling a respective connection.

10. Apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to and or as illustrated by the drawing.

11. A method of controlling a connection to a LAN to another network comprising:

   providing a router connected by an interface to ports for applications running on terminals on the LAN;

   providing a connection controller for controlling the connection between the router and the another network;

   monitoring use of the interface to the ports; and

in the event of the interface being unused for the connections to the ports sending a message to the network controller to break the connection between the router and the another network.

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12.A method as claimed in claim 11 wherein the use of a port is recorded in a network address translator table.

10   10. A method substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to and as illustrated by the drawing.